

# SPOTLIGHT on YOUTH



*Environmental enthusiast Katherine Zak*

## Youth Advocates Make a Difference

**A**pproximately six years ago the Redmond Board of Park Commissioners created a Youth Advocate seat -- now increased to two-- as an opportunity for Redmond youth, ages 14 to 18, to provide perspectives on park issues. As Youth Advocates, young people enrich their academic skills with “real world” experiences. They learn leadership and citizenship skills as they work with

others, grow more capable and effective as they develop skills in creating solutions and listening, and become powerful role models in motivating other young people to get involved in our community.

“The Park Board Commissioners takes the Youth Advocate positions seriously; as potential mentors we share in the reward involved and committed young residents bring to our City,” says Lori Snodgrass, Parks Board Commissioner. “Young people exposed to the difference volunteering can

make in a community tend to stay engaged and committed to improving it.” Last year, Youth Advocates Katherine Zak and Larrisa Jones participated in the program.

Larrisa is studying to be an anesthesiologist at Boston College. “The greatest thing I learned as a Youth Advocate,” she says, “is that behind everything we enjoy in our lives there are hard working people and that you have to speak up for yourself to generate any sort of change. Everyone learns this through the news or history but it seems that it’s never as clearly defined as it is when you actually experience it first hand. The lessons I learned during this experience will be useful in my future career as a doctor because it’s almost inevitable that I will be faced with tough situations and decisions (medical ethics etc), and, in those times, having the skills to stand for something will be invaluable.” She says she enjoyed budget planning. “During that process, I felt the input I provided would help Parks staff make decisions that

would affect future generations long after I left Redmond.” She says she would definitely recommend the program to other teams. “I never realized all the work and planning it took to run a small city like Redmond,” Larrisa comments, “This position opened my eyes to all the City has to offer.”

Katherine Zak is studying to be an engineer. “I’m an environmental enthusiast,” says Katherine, “so I hoped that I would be able to help develop an environmentally-friendly Redmond. I enjoyed working on the Municipal Campus Master Plan—a central park is something I’ve wanted to see in Redmond for a long time. I really look forward to seeing the progress. Katherine also received a Circle of Leadership award from Mayor Ives last summer. When asked to comment on her award, she said, “to have the Mayor recognize me for the work that I did was really great. I didn’t need the recognition, but it was nice to know that she thought I did a good job as a Youth Advocate.”

## Books to Grow On

**A**t the Redmond Library, one King County Library System service makes it easy to involve young children and their parents/caregivers in fun, interactive learning activities. Books to Grow On ([www.kcls.org/webkids/btgo/index.cfm](http://www.kcls.org/webkids/btgo/index.cfm)) provides theme kits that are filled with books to read-aloud, cassette tapes, videos, and other materials covering a variety of topics. The theme kit for diversity, for example, includes the children's book, *Hello, World!*, the adult resource book *Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs*, as well as a *World Playground 2* CD, *All the Colors of the Earth* video, and *Children of the World* puzzles.

The kits are perfect for child care providers, teachers and busy parents to use right out of the box with preschool-age children. The *Books to Grow On* theme menu, including complete contents

and curriculum sheets, lists a host of subjects for exploration, among these; diversity, Asian Folktales, French, Sign Language, Spanish 1,2,3, African Folktales, World Folktales, People with Special Needs, Native American Folktales and American Folktales. For bilingual learners, there are also dual language selections, including Arabic, Panjabi, Somali, Vietnamese, French and Spanish.

## Diversity in our Schools

**L**ake Washington School District pays special attention to economic, social and ethnic diversity. To develop awareness and understanding, Chip Kimball, Assistant Superintendent of City Schools says from 1999-2000, the district

hired national diversity trainer LueRachelle Brim-Atkin, Seattle, to train all of its 1,500 teachers and administrators. Educators learned to be sensitive to ethnic, sexual, religious, cultural and economic differences. "The largest observable learning challenge among students," Kimball comments, "is language difficulty. More subtle, but every bit as important, are cultural, social and economic differences. We want to ensure all of our students are all successful in school. On the average, it takes a student two years to learn enough language skills to assimilate into mainstream programs."

In order to support this goal, the district provides English Language Learners (ELL) instruction, translators and language specialists in the classroom. Homework clubs and community events support students who are struggling. Both language savvy volunteers and the translation service, Transact, are used to translate school publications into languages other than English. At Einstein Elementary, 25% of students require language support. Kimball says

administrators continually update their awareness since Redmond's demographics are constantly in flux. "We believe," says Kimball, "that successful diversity is a combination of schools, government and other community resources working together to leverage each other's strengths."

With a full 50% of students living in poverty homes, programs such as free and reduced lunches and distribution of free surplus computers are critical to these kids' success. In particular, Einstein Elementary serves a diverse population. With a wide range of students from all socio-economic and different ethnic backgrounds, its largest minority group is Hispanic. About 25% of these students are in an English Language Learning (ELL) program.

Principal Jack Tobin says a Diversity Chairperson on the Parent, Teacher, Student Association (PTSA) and a committee of parents and teachers called Project Outreach help to address some of their diversity issues. Project Outreach has organized homework clubs, provided translation services



for documents and translators for Curriculum Night, Parent Teacher Conferences and other school functions, and helped the school make phone calls to families. Tobin says, "From an educational standpoint, it's really fun to see the huge gains these students make. We often get students who come to us speaking no English and in a few years, they have conversational English skills and are making tremendous progress academically."

As proof of the school's success, on the SchoolMatters.com website, Einstein Elementary ranked tops for math and reading proficiency among economically disadvantaged students. No other Washington school showed higher math and reading proficiency when compared against the number of economically disadvantaged students. Einstein Elementary not only serves a diverse

population, it's doing a great job of it as well.

## Calling young thespians and playwrights

**S**econdStory Repertory will hold a 24-Hour Teen Play Festival December 29-30. For 24-creatively-packed-hours, a company of 16-20 teens selected by SecondStory Repertory will write, rehearse and ultimately perform four ten-minute plays. Through an application process for playwrights and auditions for actors, SecondStory will determine which lucky teens will join the company. On December 29th at 6 pm, the selected teens will meet at SecondStory and write down themes on pieces of paper. One theme will be drawn and the playwrights

will go home and write a ten-minute play based on that theme. The scripts will be due at 7 am the next morning and shortly thereafter, actors and directors will meet and rehearse the teens' plays. The final play will be performed that evening, December 30, 7 pm, at SecondStory Repertory, located upstairs in Redmond Town Center. Interested teens can call or email Stephanie at SecondStory Repertory, [stephanie@secondstoryrep.org](mailto:stephanie@secondstoryrep.org) or 425-991-6777.

## Get in Motion, Redmond!

*Hey Redmond families... it's time to Get in Motion! Walk, bike, carpool, or take the bus and earn one of these great prizes.*

**T**he Get in Motion campaign is encouraging Redmond families to do something other than drive alone.

### How do we participate?

1. Pledge to do something other than drive alone once a week for four months. Kids can pledge to walk, bike, carpool, or ride the bus to school or activities at least once a week. You can take the pledge online at [www.GORtrip.com](http://www.GORtrip.com).
2. Parents can get involved too! Visit [www.GORtrip.com](http://www.GORtrip.com) to learn about personalized commute assistance and incentives (such as \$300 towards vanpool fare or a \$50 gift card for walking, biking, or carpooling to work) for the commuters in your family. We'll give the whole family Get in Motion t-shirts and free bus tickets just for taking the pledge.
3. Encourage your school, sports team, or community group to join the campaign. Once your school or group collectively achieves 1,000 trips by foot, bicycle, carpool, or bus, we'll throw you an ice cream party. Children will also receive small prizes for achieving 25 and 50 trips by transportation alternative. Contact us at 425-556-2448 for more information and to sign up your school or community group.

### Why walk, cycle, or carpool?

**Health:** Everyone, especially kids, need physical activity and clean, fresh air. Walking or cycling to school and after-school activities is a great way to ensure that the whole family is getting enough exercise. And carpooling or busing keeps cars off the road, which makes your streets safer and your air cleaner.

**Community:** While 93% of residents rate the quality of life





in Redmond as excellent or above average, traffic congestion is one of Redmond's key challenges. Doing something to relieve traffic congestion in Redmond will improve your quality of life and make your neighborhood a more attractive place to live and raise children. Organizing a group of children to walk or ride together is also a great way to get to know your neighbors.

**Convenience:** Do you have enough free time in the day? Give parents a break from driving kids to school and activities.

#### **What about safety?**

70% of parents walked or bicycled to school when they were young, but only 17% of their children do. Many parents drive their children to school because of concerns about their safety.

It is very important to teach your children pedestrian and cyclist skills, and give them plenty of chances to practice those skills. The Get in Motion campaign provides great opportunities to learn and practice safe pedestrian and cycling skills.

Redmond elementary schools are also partnering with the City of Redmond to ensure that children who walk or bicycle to school are safe. The City of Redmond Public Works Department makes sidewalk improvements throughout the city, tests new and innovative pedestrian safety devices around schools, uses strategies to keep drivers at safe speeds, and develops safe routes to school.



**Stop the commotion...**



**Get Them in Motion!**

**[www.GOrtrip.com](http://www.GOrtrip.com)**

**Personal trip assistance**

**Free travel ♦ Rewards**



**REDMOND TRIP REDUCTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM**  
*Winner of the EPA's 2004 Clean Air Excellence Award*